Giants, Kachinas, and Cannibals

Gary A. David

"There were giants in the earth in those days..." (Genesis 6:4)

Native American Tall Tales

Legends of giants are found not only in the Bible but also from all corners of the world, and the American Southwest is no exception. It seems natural that a land of such immensity would spawn creatures of comparable size.

Most tribes of this region have some collective memory of giants. Diné [Navajo] legends, for instance, refer to the *anáye*, which literally means "alien gods" but also implies those who speak a non-Navajo language. These ogres attained great stature, sometimes "half as tall as the tallest pine-tree." Although not particularly fast or smart, they were connoisseurs of human flesh. The fiends were even known to consume each other.

One giant with the difficult name of Tse'tahotsiltá'li, which means "He Who Kicks (People) Down the Cliff," was struck between the eyes with a stone knife and killed by the Navajo culture hero Nayénezgani, or Slayer of Alien Gods. His corpse was beset upon by his 12 children, each of which ravenously desired a choice piece of their father to consume. Nayénezgani then slew 11 of the 12 giant-children, but the last one was so disgustingly filthy and ugly that the Navajo took pity on him and sent him away. "The boy [a cannibal monster, really] went to Natsisaán [Navajo Mountain, elevation 10,388 feet on the Utah-Arizona border], as he was told, and there he became the progenitor of the Puhutes [Paiutes], a people ugly, starved, and ragged, who never wash themselves and live on the vermin of the desert."[1]

The Navajo account is somewhat confusing because the Paiutes themselves, who lived mostly in Nevada and Utah, have legends of fierce battles with red-haired giants. Add to this another twist: Members of the Hopi *Ko'kop* (or Fire) Clan, who once lived in the vicinity of Navajo Mountain, were traditionally known as the "redheads." (The Hopi name of the mountain is Toko'navi, literally "flesh in abundance.") This most aggressive of clans was first to emerge from the underworld at the beginning of the current era (Fourth World) but declined a leadership role because its members wanted to stay by themselves. The *Ko'kop* founded the presently extinct Warrior Society named *Mòmtsit*, or *Mots*, meaning "disheveled hair." As the legendary enemy of the Aztecs, the Ko'kop is actually a phratry, or grouping, that includes a number of other clans: Masau'u (god of death and the underworld), Coyote, Cedar, Pinyon, and Yucca.[2] The related Hopi word *motski* refers to the narrow-leaf yucca, *Yucca angustissima*.

Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins, a Paiute who lived during the latter half of the 19th century, was the first Native American woman to publish in English. Her 1883 autobiography titled *Life Among the Paiutes* describes, among other things, her tribe's adversaries. These were a fierce group of as many as 2,600 people who once lived by Nevada's Humboldt Sink, an intermittent dry lakebed 11 miles long and four miles wide. They hunted and fished the marshy area in bulrush canoes made of tule grass.

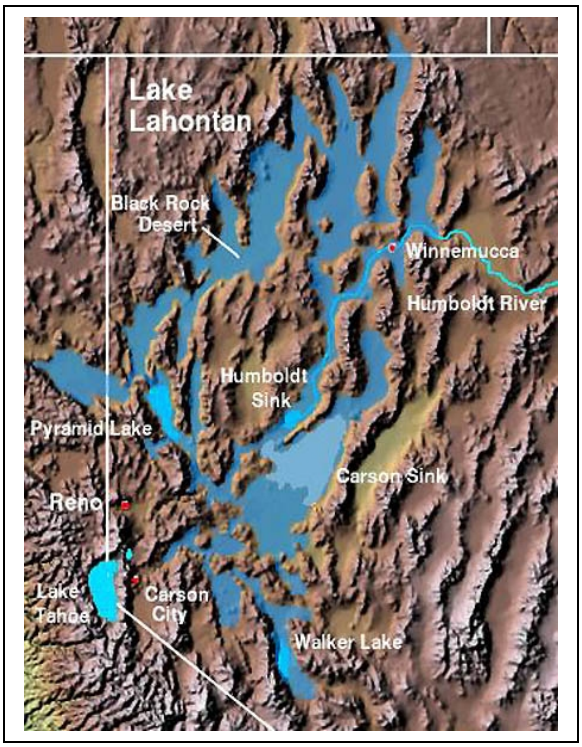
The barbarians were called *Say-do-carah*, which means "conqueror" or "enemy." A lesser-known source spells it *Side-okahs*, which, Mrs. Hopkins claims, more specifically denotes

cannibals.[3] She said that they even engaged in necrophagy—or digging up and eating human corpses.

A three-year war fought with bow-and-arrows raged between these despicable creatures and her tribe. The brutes escaped to Lovelock Cave, where Hopkins' kin piled and ignited sagebrush and firewood at its mouth, finally smothering them.[4] "My people say that the tribe we exterminated had reddish hair. I have some of their hair, which has been handed down from father to son. I have a dress which has been in our family a great many years, trimmed with this reddish hair. I am going to wear it some time when I lecture. It is called the mourning dress, and no one has such a dress but my family."[5]

Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins, Paiute "Queen."

In 1911, miners were extracting bat guano from this cave located 22 miles southwest of Lovelock, Nevada. The horseshoe-shaped cavern sits atop a high hill and is about 45 feet deep and 160 feet wide. Out of a six-feet-deep layer of guano, numerous Native American artifacts were unearthed. These included woven basketry and mats, sandals, fishnets, fishhooks, arrows and atlatl darts, fur or feather blankets, textiles, moccasins, stuffed birds' heads and ceremonial feathers as well as worked pieces of stone, bone, horn and leather. They even found finely crafted duck decoys made of reeds, which, along with the fishing equipment, remind us that a huge lake once occupied this arid region in ancient times.



Prehistoric Lake Lahontan in Nevada formed during the Ice Age about 12,500 years ago. As one of the largest closed-drainage-basin lakes in North America, it covered 8,500 square miles and in places was 500 to 900 feet deep.

A probable calendar stone was also discovered. This torus-shaped object had 365 notches on the outside rim and 52 notches on the inside rim.[6] (The numeral 52, incidentally, was used as a primary number in the Mayan calendar system.)

Most surprising, however, was the discovery of a mummy six-and-a-half-feet tall with bright red hair. The miners, in fact, uncovered 13 mummies before two University of California archaeologists named Llewellyn Loud and Mark Harrington were called in. Unlike the Egyptian variety, these bodies were naturally mummified due to the arid climate. By the time the excavations were completed, the skeletal remains of nearly 60 individuals and over 10,000 artifacts had been recovered. The scientists estimated that the cave had initially been inhabited between 3,000 and 4,000 years ago. It should be noted that the average height for a person living in the American Southwest at that time was between five and five-and-a-half feet.

Later archaeological research at the site pushed back the initial period of human habitation to about 2700 BC with a total of 20,000 specimens found. One “large femur” was radiocarbon-dated at 1450 ± 80 BC. What exactly ‘large’ means, the report does not say.[7]

Like a lot of the anomalies in the American Southwest, much of the physical evidence of the Lovelock Cave giants has been misplaced, simply lost, or intentionally hidden. Unconfirmed rumors persist of large skulls or bones gathering dust in the basements of museums in Lovelock, Carson City, or Winnemucca. Some even say that the tall, red-headed stranger referred to above was absconded by the local Masonic organization for its initiation rituals.

A recent issue of *Ancient American* magazine published color photos of four skulls housed at the small museum in Winnemucca. The skull size is somewhat larger than modern skulls but the jaws are significantly larger. The curator there claimed that additional mummies, skulls, and

artifacts were shipped to Berkeley, California, but "…that the state will not recognize those bodies & that they are not allowed to display them."[8] This may be either a cover-up or just an attempt to avoid relinquishing them to American Indian tribal groups due to NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act).

Plaster caste of modern jaw next to large jaw in the collection of the Winnemucca museum. Photo courtesy of Stan Nielsen, © 1995-2010.

Discovery of giants in the Southwest continued well into the 20th century. In Brewer's Cave on Temple Hill near Manti, Utah, a pair of mummified giants, both about nine feet tall, were found inside two stone coffins. One body had red hair and the other blond hair. They were both wearing crowns and breastplates.

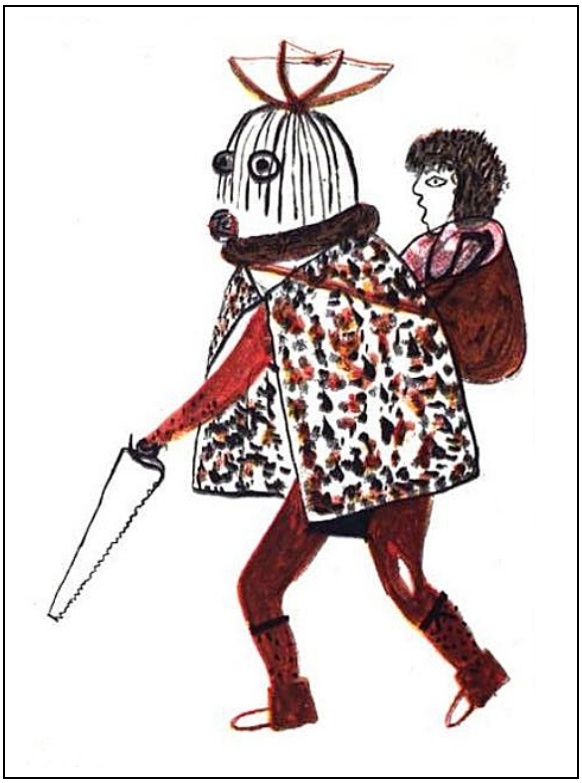
A set of stone steps led to the burial chamber, whose dimensions were about 14 by 20 feet. It also supposedly contained ten stone boxes, five of which held small metal plates of bronze or even gold engraved with an unknown script. A few of the indecipherable icons on the plates resembled, some say, modern computer schematics. Other artifacts included shields and a sword.[9]

These archaeological discoveries seem to corroborate numerous Native American legends of giants. From the San Ildefonso Pueblo in New Mexico comes one account of a man-eating giant who lived underground. "…in the great cave on the north side of the mesa there once lived (they said) a cannibal giant. His cave was connected with the interior of the vast, house-like mesa by tunnels which took him to his rooms. His influence on the surrounding country was heavy. Persons did the proper things to avoid being caught and eaten by him."[10]

The Hopi also share this idea of giants disciplining people –especially children– lest they become a meal. For instance, Nataska, or Bigmouth Ogre, wears a black mask with goggle-eyes, large crocodile-like jaws that clack together, sharp teeth, and a green crows-foot painted on his forehead. A curved horn rises on each side of his head. In one hand he carries a saw, in the other either a hatchet or bow-and-arrows. He supposedly has the ability to swallow children whole. Another version of this bogeyman is called Tseeveyo (also spelled Chaveyo), literally "Giant Kachina."

The So'yoko Mana, or Ogre Woman, is also an awesome (read "bad") creature that haunts the Hopi territory. Her dark mask has stringy black hair and a protruding tongue. In one hand she might carry a bloodstained butcher knife, in the other a long crook to snag misbehaving children. On her back is a large burden basket (*hoapu*) with which to carry off naughty kids.

The young boys' task is to catch mice or other rodents, while the young girls' job is to grind corn as offerings to the threatening beings. If these monsters come growling and stomping into the village without the children having done their duties, then they are abducted. The terror these creatures instill certainly seems unduly harsh by modern standards of child rearing.[11]



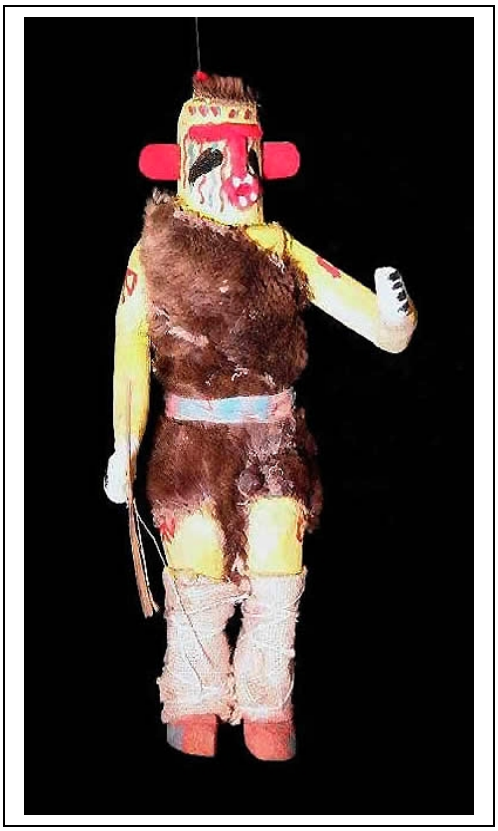
So'yoko Taqa, Hopi painting from Fewkes, *Hopi Katcinas*. This male version of the So'yoko Mana also carries a burden basket to abduct children. He carries a saw, perhaps to cut off his victims' limbs.

Hopi painting of Bigmouth Ogre from Jesse Walter Fewkes, *Hopi Katcinas*, Dover Publications, Inc.

Scholar Susan E. James has even compared the Hopi Purification ceremony in February, which includes these intimidating giants, to the Aztec rite of child sacrifice.

> "…during the Hopi Powamu, children are of featured importance and offer a sacrifice of tears (and sometimes blood) in the whipping rites conducted at this time in the kivas. An apparent mimetic reenactment of the Aztec sacrifice of children occurs on the fourteenth day of the celebrations with the arrival at the mesas of the kachina Soyoko accompanied by the kachina He'e'e and the ogre-kachinas, generally known collectively as Nata'askas [or Nataskas]."[12]

The tears of the terrified children produce a sympathetic magic that causes abundant rainfall in the coming year. At Second Mesa the ogres are accompanied by Masau'u, the Hopi god of death and the underworld. Physical contact with Soyoko is thought to actually bring about death. Although the Hopi probably never actually performed child sacrifice like the Aztecs did, the parallel rituals induced the same outcome of agricultural fertility. After the giants depart, taking their chaos and violent behavior with them, the "purified" village reverts to its natural harmony and balance for yet another year.



Heyeya (H'e'e) Kachina with *Tau* (T-shape) on forehead.

Nataska, Bigmouth Ogre.

One legend from Wupatki tells of a So'yoko Taqa, or Ogre Man, who was constantly killing and eating people in the village. An unfortunate teenage boy out hunting in the foothills of the San Francisco Peaks was caught and held captive by this giant with buggy eyes, large snout, and wild hair. The boy managed to escape only with the help of Old Spider Woman –a recurrent aid to Hopis in distress– and an immense rattlesnake. The reptile spat venom on the boy's arrows, with which he shot Ogre Man dead.

His wife, So'yoko Mana, then sought revenge, but this time the boy was assisted by a billy goat. In addition to a mean streak, the female ogre curiously possessed a "vagina dentata," or sharp teeth inside her privates.[13] Luckily, after the goat smeared a magically protective sumac berry potion on his member, he tupped her with such ferocity that she died in the process.[14] The Hopi certainly do not bowdlerize their legends.

Even from as far away as China, we find ancient tales of giants living in the American Southwest. Compiled at the amazingly early date of 2250 BC, *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* states:

> "In the Great Waste Beyond the Eastern Sea there is a mountain which by hyperbole is called 'the Place where the Sun and Moon Rise.' It has rolling

> valleys and mountains. This is the Great Man's Country... A man by the name of Cheu-Fu-Chang picked up a wooden arrow with an iron point which was six feet and a half long. Reckoning from the length of the arrow, the shooter must must been a rod and five or six feet tall."[15]

A rod = 16.5 feet, so the archer may have been over 21 feet tall, according to the account. The mountain referred to is apparently in the vicinity of the Great Luminous Canyon, or Grand Canyon.

Giant Steps: Evidence of Six-toed Giants in the Southwest

Other fragmentary tales from the Southwest describe prehistoric gigantism—except with an added element. In 1891 in Crittenden, Arizona, which is north of the village of Patagonia (literally meaning "land of mythical giants"), workmen excavated a massive stone sarcophagus buried at a depth of eight feet. Inside was a granite mummy case designed for a human body that was once about 12 feet tall but had since turned to dust after being buried for hundreds or perhaps thousands of years. The carving on the granite case curiously indicated that the giant had six toes on each foot. That certainly rings a biblical bell.[16]

> "And there was yet a battle in Gath, where was a man of great stature, that had on every hand six fingers, and on every foot six toes, four and twenty in number; and he also was born to the giant." (2 Samuel 21:20)

What is called polydactyly (or sometimes hexadactyly—that is, possessing six digits on each hand or foot) was, in fact, not uncommon in the American Southwest. For instance, a six-toed foot bone was unearthed at Sand Canyon Pueblo, a dozen miles west of Cortez, Colorado. Petroglyphs of human figures with six toes and/or six fingers have also been discovered 50 miles west of Sand Canyon along the San Juan River in southeastern Utah.

From what the Hopi call Nuvakwewtaqa, or Chavez Pass Ruins in Arizona, archaeologists also found a foot bone of a juvenile that exhibits a left fifth metatarsal with a lateral branch, making it essentially a six-toed foot.[17]

Perhaps the most compelling evidence, however, occurs at a famous 10th century AD ruin, where we have both rock art depiction and skeletal evidence. Paleopathologist Ethne Barnes writes:

> "At the base of the cliff face behind Pueblo Bonito in Chaco Canyon in northwest New Mexico, there is a rock art panel depicting a set of three vertically placed human footprints carved into the rock face. They are directed upwards in a normal gait pattern with a right, left, right foot print. All three foot prints have six toes. The extra digit clearly appears adjacent to the fifth toe (little toe) on the lateral side of the foot."[18]

The petroglyphs showing the six-toed person are surprisingly corroborated by the discovery of a six-toed foot bone. Specifically, in Room 330 of Pueblo Bonito a bifid fifth metatarsal from the right foot of an adult was found. This proves that the rock carving was just not an artistic

expression as we conceive it today but an actual description of a physical condition of one or more of the inhabitants of Chaco Canyon.

In brief, it seems that more than one person with six toes on each foot was walking around the American Southwest. Far from being seen as having a deformity, though, he or she may have even achieved a ritual status seemingly bequeathed by the gods. But with more than a thousand years separating our society from theirs, fleshing out the specific role of those blessed (or cursed) with four-and-twenty digits is –forgive me– a rather tall order.

Petroglyph of six-fingered handprint below snake figure, Three Rivers Petroglyph Site, New Mexico.

Petroglyphs of six-toed footprints on the cliff behind Pueblo Bonito in Chaco Canyon.

Pictographs (rock paintings) of giant red figures in The Great Gallery, Horseshoe Canyon, Utah (part of Canyonsland National Park). The panel is 200 feet long, 15 feet high, and the figures are about 7 feet tall—or lifesize?

The Colossi of Chaco Canyon

Let's recap the major traits of giants in order of importance. (1) They are –obviously– tall, or at least taller than average. (2) They might have a proclivity for cannibalism. (3) They may have six fingers on each hand and/or six toes on each foot.

Ugliness or freakishness, however, may or may not be present. We recall that the biblical giants, those "men of renown" (Genesis 6:4), were not described as grotesque but just aggressive or violent. If we met a giant on the street today, we might find him rude, crude, or even lewd but certainly not inhuman.

The three criteria of giants seem to come together, fortuitously, at Chaco Canyon. In the previous section of this essay, I discussed the third trait, polydactyly, there and elsewhere in the Southwest. Now let me address the first attribute of height, saving the most controversial one, cannibalism, till last.

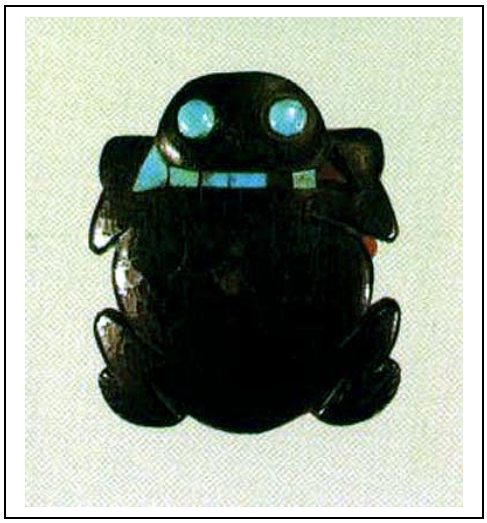
Chaco Canyon is the largest complex of prehistoric sites in the Southwest, and one of the most archaeologically important. The dozen large pueblos in the canyon exhibit exquisite architectural style and craftsmanship. More than 200,000 pine roof beams were used in their construction. With an average of 15 feet in length, seven inches in diameter, and 60 pounds in weight, they were hauled from the Chuska and San Mateo Mountains over 50 miles away. Was this the work of giants? If not, then it was at least a gigantic feat.

The "Great House" later named Pueblo Bonito was erected from 30,000 tons of shaped sandstone blocks quarried in the canyon and 25,000 imported roof beams. This D-shaped prehistoric "apartment building" contained immense plazas and over 650 to 800 terraced rooms, some of which were four to five stories tall. The complex covered two-and-one-half acres and had 40 kivas (round, subterranean prayer chambers).

A number of "high status" burials have been discovered at Chaco. A generally greater variety of grave goods of higher quality workmanship are associated with Pueblo Bonito than almost anywhere else in the Southwest. These artifacts include thousands of turquoise beads, *Olivella* and *Haliotis* shells, crystals, and worked pieces of hematite, azurite, malachite, galena, gypsum, kaolin, and iron pyrite. Also discovered were numerous adornments such as pendants, necklaces, bracelets, earrings, and copper bells—this last artifact perhaps originating in Arizona. One necklace found at Pueblo Bonito had over 2,500 tiny, finely crafted turquoise beads and four turquoise pendants.

Woven items included baskets, yucca and bulrush mats, cotton cloth, and feather robes. Archaeologists also uncovered sandstone tablets, mortars and pestles, bone awls, bone scrapers, bone dice, obsidian projectile points, reed arrows, leaf-shaped stone knives, pipes, throwing sticks (boomerangs), ceremonial sticks, clay plume holders, wooden flutes, and shell trumpets.

Artistically rendered ceramics painted mostly black-on-white were also unearthed: bowls, jars, pitchers, ollas, mugs, ladles, and unique cylinder vessels. One frog effigy carved from jet was inlaid with turquoise, while other effigies of mountain lions and birds had been crafted as well. A cylindrical basket was also beautifully inlaid with a turquoise mosaic.



Jet frog with turquoise inlay.

Black-on-white pitcher and olla, Chaco Canyon.

In other words, the standard of living was fairly high for the people who used these items. Rather than an egalitarian model for Pueblo Bonito, an authoritarian hierarchy probably existed there. In comparison to the smaller surrounding pueblos, this Great House must have been the seat of imperial power and prestige. In all likelihood the high status was hereditarily ascribed rather than individually achieved. The reigning polity was thus both an oligarchy and a plutocracy, and probably a theocracy as well. In other words, a few rich priests had ruled.

The valuable ornaments and ceremonial paraphernalia, which were stored primarily in the northern section of the pueblo, suggest the presence of this priesthood. The burials are located within rooms rather than outside, which implies, paradoxically, both a respect for the rulers and a need for protection of their graves from pilfering.

These sociopolitical leaders were apparently healthier than the rest of the inhabitants of Chaco Canyon, and thus achieved greater stature—both literally and figuratively.

> "Perhaps the best evidence of better health over a number of generations is attained growth, or stature, because this is one of the more sensitive indicators of nutritional status. It is particularly significant for Pueblo Bonito, where both males and females from the northern room clusters are *the tallest reported for Southwestern populations*. [italics added] Femur lengths for the northern cluster burials average 44.5 cm [17.5 inches] for males and 41.6 cm [16 inches] for females."[19]

The average length of the femur of a modern human is 48 cm (19 inches), so this elite group of religious cultists had long bones only one-and-a-half inches shorter than ours. They were certainly not giants per se, but they may have seemed that way to the shorter populace at Chaco, especially if other methods of intimidation were employed. (More on this aspect later.)

In this region the average lifespan was a mere 27 years, while no more than 15 percent lived to age 50.[20] This older minority of the population achieved its longevity in part by a lower rate of iron deficiency anemia. "When compared to other Southwestern populations, the Pueblo Bonito rates for porotic hyperostosis (25% for infants and children) indicative of iron deficiency are among the lowest reported and lower than for the small-site population (83%)."[21]

These statistics are a rather sad proof of the quotidian suffering that the lower classes endured in the social system at Chaco Canyon. In the "suburbs" and smaller villages outside of what maverick archaeologist Stephen Lekson has called "downtown Chaco," the inhabitants fared much poorer in terms of diet and lifestyle. Another archaeologist named Steven A. LeBlanc, who more than anyone else refuted the stereotype of the peaceful Anasazi, writes:

> "…one thing about the Chaco Interaction Sphere is remarkably clear: This is the only time in the entire Anasazi sequence when there is striking evidence for distinct classes of people. The people who lived in Great Houses inhabited structures very different from the rest of the population. Great House rooms were several times larger and taller than those in the surrounding room blocks. Great Houses were high and massive, whereas the room blocks were low and small. Anyway else in the world, such a dichotomy of living arrangements would be seen as an elite/nonelite duality. These differences did not occur earlier in the Southwest, and they were gone by the beginning of the 1200s."[22]

Were the rooms of the elite larger simply because of social status? Or were the ceilings higher because of physical stature? It might have been a case of both.

The normal Ancestral Puebloans, due to their corn-based, high carb diets, were shorter than, say, the normal Plains Indians who feasted on protein-rich buffalo. Still, the taller upper-class that lived at Pueblo Bonito must have gotten their meat from somewhere. Once the human population of Chaco Canyon reached a certain level, the wild game resources such as antelope and deer began to be depleted. The problem of how to obtain dietary protein remained, however.

Adventurer and author Richard D. Fisher proposes a radical theory regarding the kivas in Chaco Canyon and at other prehistoric villages of the Southwest. He believes that the smaller ones did not function as sacerdotal structures but were actually corn silos, whereas the Great Kivas served as communal kitchens. He also claims that the Chacoans used "fertilizer dehydration basins" in order to provide soil nutrients to produce spectacular bumper corn crops.

One would think this food surplus would be advantageous, but unfortunately it had some unintended negative consequences. *Zea mays* (corn) has all the essential amino acids for growth but lacks proper iron levels needed for robust health. Hence, the seeds of the culture's destruction were planted in its maize mounds. Fisher concludes:

> "This naturally occurring resource [namely, fertilizer] allowed the Chaco Canyon Anasazi to fill their massive system of granaries, increase population densities and create monumental architecture that had a practical and spiritual use such as Pueblo Bonito, the hundreds of other Great Houses and the extensive 'road system.' With the surplus corn that they were able to produce, however, came increasing anemia and depletion of regional wildlife populations which provided the essential dietary iron, leading in turn to increased warfare and even cannibalism."[23]

Whether or not Mr. Fisher is correct in his assumption about the ultimate role of the kiva in Anasazi life, his theory points to a society based on dual stratification: the corn-eaters versus the meat-eaters. Now the legends of cannibalistic "giants" are starting to make sense.

Cannibal Canyon?

Some archaeologists believe that a ritual terror campaign of fear and retribution centered at Pueblo Bonito developed during Chaco Canyon's dominance between about 900 and 1200 AD. David R. Wilcox from the Museum of Northern Arizona posits the existence of a relatively small but well-trained military force that would travel to outlying areas in order to demand tributes of food or valuable items for the Great Houses, including Pueblo Bonito.[24] If this is the case, then the despotic governing body resembled the Roman Empire more than the Catholic Church.

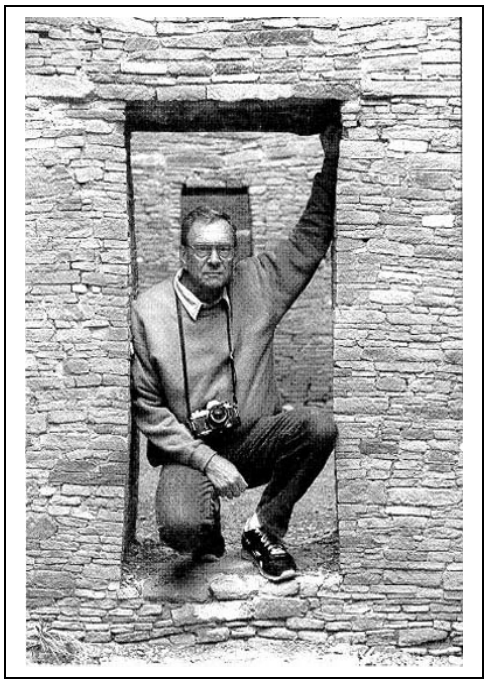
An even more controversial scenario, however, has been proposed. Christy G. Turner, the regents' professor of anthropology at Arizona State University, caused a furor both in academic circles and among modern Indian tribes when his book *Man Corn* was published in 1999. The title comes from a Nahuatl (Aztec) term *tlacatlaolli*, which means "sacred meal of sacrificed human meat, cooked with corn."[25]

Turner found evidence of at least 38 episodes of cannibalism in the Southwest between 900 and 1300 AD, involving the consumption of at least 286 individuals of all ages and both sexes. And this is a conservative estimate.[26]

The extensive forensic and osteological evidence gathered at various archaeological sites includes fracturing, chopping, sawing, cutting, and breaking of human bones consistent with food preparation. Some bones were also split lengthwise, apparently to extract the marrow. Others, especially skulls, had "anvil abrasions" received when they were put on an anvil-like stone and then bashed apart with a club or another stone.

Turner claims that the overall bone damage due to butchering and cooking can be distinguished from non-cannibalistic bone damage or traditional mortuary practices. A portion of the skeletal material he examined had polished tips, which suggest that they rubbed against the interior surface of cooking pots in the process of boiling that he called "pot polish." Burn marks on some of the bones indicate that the flesh was still on them when it was roasted. Burns at the

back of numerous skulls indicate that they were placed in the fire, effectively simmering the brains in their own brainpans. A grisly kitchen indeed!



Anthropologist and author Christy Turner at Chaco Canyon.

Less than 10 miles northeast of Four Corners (the geographic point where Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona meet), a very important piece of archaeological evidence was discovered in the year 2000. Specifically, a piece of fossilized human feces called a coprolite had been deposited in the hearth of a pit house (a single-room, semi-subterranean dwelling) built in Cowboy Wash in about 1150 AD. This coprolite unexpectedly contained the residue of human myoglobin, a protein that occurs solely in human muscle or heart tissue.

Anthropologist Brian R. Billman of the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill found the bones of seven people at the site, both male and female of all ages, that exhibited incisions typical of butchering. Defecation in the ashes of the fire that cooked this meal was probably one attacker's final act of disdain. Other hacked and battered skeletal remains at adjacent sites suggest that as many as 35 people may have been killed and consumed in the assault.[27]

This evidence along with Turner's work suddenly altered the archaeological paradigm used for decades to describe the Anasazi (the Navajo word for the ancestors of the Pueblo People). Over night the peaceful, cooperative, humble agrarian had become a violent, vindictive, bloodthirsty cannibal. This reactionary characterization was not quite accurate, though, since Turner's scenario assumes that one or more bands of Mesoamerican warrior-cultists migrated into the American Southwest, radically changing the tenor of the existing cultural landscape of the indigenous Puebloans.

The epicenter of the cannibalistic practices, however, appears to be Chaco Canyon's Great Houses—characteristically un-Anasazi in the monumental scale of their architecture. Turner comments:

> "Southwestern cannibalism seems to be explainable, at least for the moment, by a hypothesis that combines social control, social pathology, and ritual purpose within the Chacoan sphere of influence. Each of these classes of explanation is evident as well in the intertwined Mesoamerican psychosocial, economic, and cosmological beliefs that were acted out through interminable warfare, unimaginable amounts of human sacrifice, and centuries of cannibalism—all carried out on the orders of tyrannical rulers with unlimited authority over the lives of their people. It appears to us that this harsh, totalitarian, and fatalistic Mesoamerican worldview was carried to the San Juan basin by actual immigrants from Mexico and imposed on a resident population that earlier had received only bits and snatches of Mexican culture from itinerant traders, explorers, and wanderers."[28]

A few of the Hopi, who are among the descendants of the Anasazi, claim that if cannibalism had indeed taken place, the perpetrators had never been formally accepted into the Hopi clan system and were basically *qahopi*, or non-Hopi. In other words, the cannibals had been interloping foreigners migrating northward from southern Mexico.

Rina Swentzell, who grew up at Santa Clara Pueblo in New Mexico, believes that the great villages of Chaco Canyon, unlike other pueblos of the Southwest, were informed by a uncompromising sensibility that was contrary to the spirit of her own people. Rather than showing oneness with the earth and all of its creatures, the stern patriarchy was basically anthropocentric and, to use a contemporary term, "left-brained." The Chaocans, whoever they were, apparently instituted a paradigm of command and control over both human and natural resources.

> "The Chaco great houses projected a different sensibility. The finished product was very important. Skill and specialization were needed to do the fine stonework and lay the sharp-edged walls. I concluded that the structures had been built by men in the prime of life with a vision something beyond the daily life and the present moment. These were men who embraced a social-political-religious hierarchy and envisioned control and power over place, resources, and people."[29]

Even Swentzell, however, admits to hearing stories about her pueblo ancestors who resorted to cannibalism during times of extreme stress.[30]

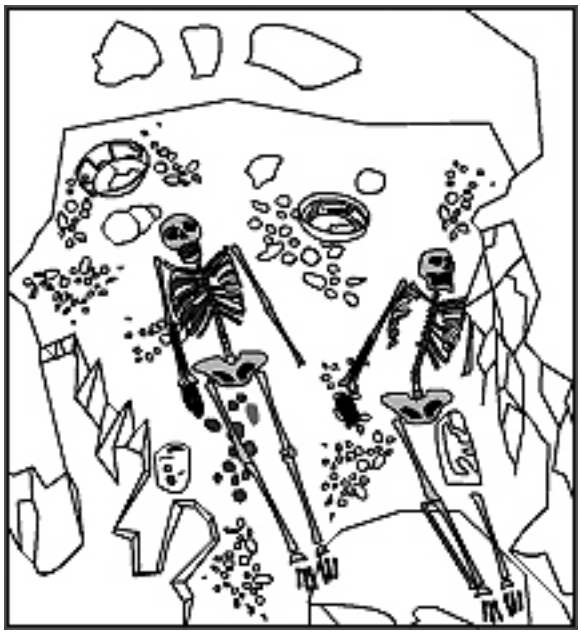
Remember Room 330 in Pueblo Bonito, where the six-toed foot bone was found? This square room with a central fire pit and a solitary access via a ceiling hatchway may have functioned as a council chamber. At one time some very dark rituals must have taken place there. In fact, Charles Manson couldn't have dreamed a more gruesome helter-skelter.

Located on the western side of the pueblo, the room contained between 23 and 32 individuals. An accurate number is difficult to obtain due to the smashed and disjointed condition –technically called "disarticulation"– of all but four of the skeletal remains. The mid-20th century archaeologist Neil M. Judd in his excavation of the site described the bones as "callously pulled and kicked about."

Skulls were smashed, crushed, or suffered other blunt force trauma. They were sometimes ritualistically arranged in clusters of two or three. Violently mutilated and dismembered, the bodies were haphazardly dumped, giving the impression of sacrificial killings. An arrowhead

was embedded in a lumbar vertebra of one individual. Intentionally chipped teeth were found in others. Another individual had its vertebrae positioned in a ring as if they had been strung together with a string and then laid down in a circle. One teenage female had a blown-out alveolar socket of an upper incisor. Yet another individual had a deep gash in the pubic bone.

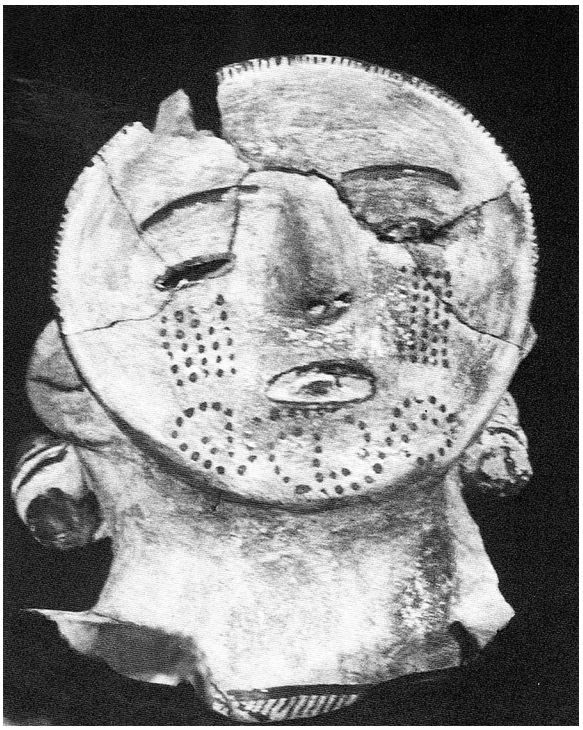
Photographs of Judd's archaeological dig, Turner says, show that "…skeletons [were] wildly scattered, awkwardly positioned, and sometimes face down."[31] Unlike other Anasazi burial sites, this charnel certainly does not show a respect for the deceased.



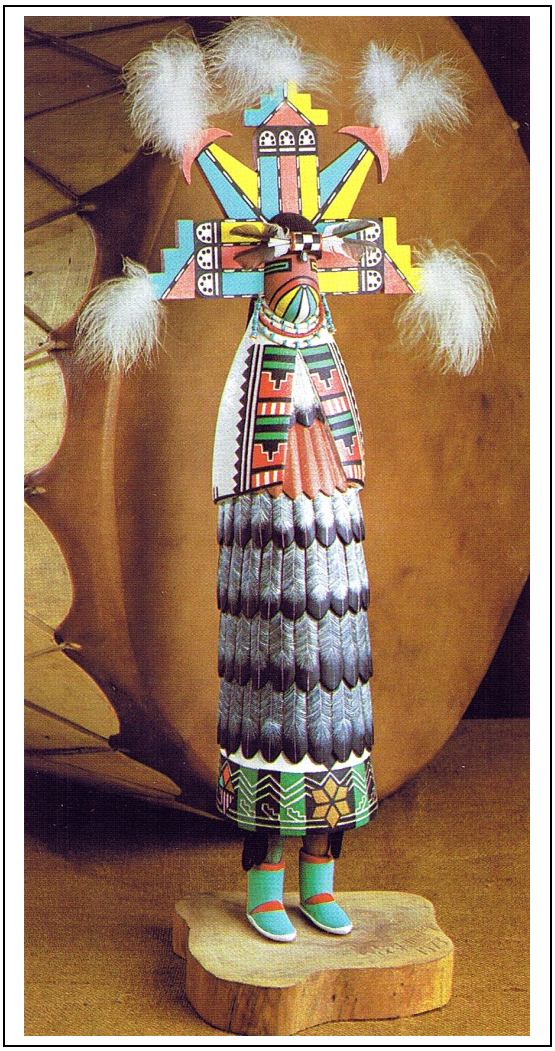
Room burial, Pueblo Bonito.

Many of the skeletons Turner examined displayed evidence of perimortem breakage—that is, fractures occurring before, at, or just after the time of death. This suggests a brutal regime that employed ritualistic torture as a comprehensive strategy for absolute psychological and political control bordering on sociopathy.

Clearly, an evil wind blew through this great house.

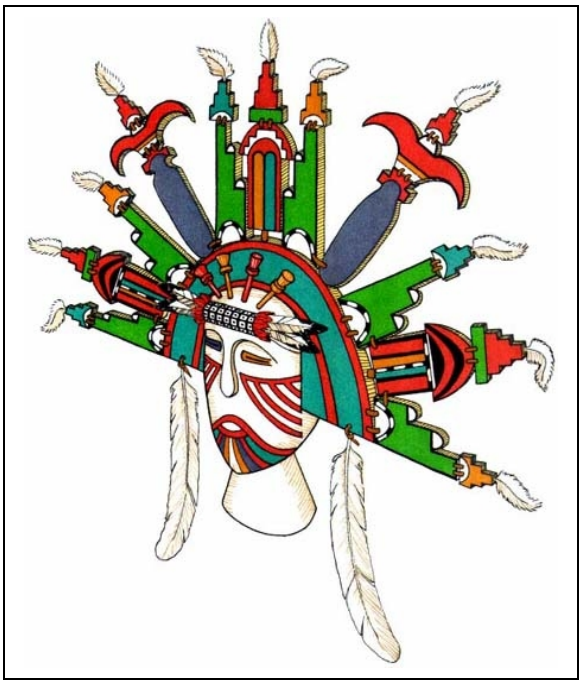


Human head on an effigy pottery vessel, Pueblo Bonito.



Salako Taka (male) kachina doll. The Salako kachina rises seven to eight feet above the plaza, towering over the other kachinas. A white shawl and a long, eagle-feathered dress cover its slender body, which is armless. Its mask has horizontal slits for eyes, no nose, and a rainbow-colored chin beneath a red mouth shaped like an inverted U. The figure wears gaudy, multi-strand turquoise necklaces—perhaps symbolic of Chaco's role as clearinghouse for the blue stone in the American Southwest. The Salako kachina's headdress, or *tablita*, adds more height, with its stepped-cloud icons and eagle plumes. These imposing Salako figures eerily floating across the plazas of Pueblo Bonito must have instilled an uncanny sense of fear mingled with reverence.

The Hopi Salako ceremony originated at Aztec Ruins, an ancient pueblo located 55 miles due north of Chaco Canyon. Archaeological evidence exists of giants living there as well. In one of the rooms the bones of an obviously high-status man nicknamed "the Warrior" was found. Wrapped in a turkey-feather blanket, his skeleton measured 6'2" tall, making him at least a foot taller than the average height of males at that time. On top of his body was found a large woven-basketry shield measuring three feet in diameter. Placed on this warrior shield were several curved sticks (boomerangs). When the discovery was made, newspapers called him "a veritable giant" and "the emperor of the Aztecs of the village."[32]



Tablita and mask of Salako Mana (female) kachina.

Do giants still walk the earth today?

In my journey to seek evidence of giants in American Southwest, I have spent a lot of time on Chaco Canyon. This erstwhile nexus of gigantism included ghastly tales of cannibalism and aberrations of both body and spirit. The Hopi word *Hopqöy* refers to Chaco Canyon as "a mythical place in the northeast where marvelous building was accomplished by *powaqam*, 'sorcerers'. The suggestion has been made that this may have to do with the Chacoan ruins."[33] In other words, Chaco was the regional center of witchcraft, by which its monumental architecture was achieved.

The Diné (Navajo) also possess memories of the imperious culture that once terrorized this dry, desolate basin. Douglas Preston's influential article was published in *The New Yorker* about the time the "cannibal controversy" first hit the popular culture. "Chaco, some older Navajo say, was a place of hideous evil. The Chaco people abused sacred ceremonies, practiced witchcraft and cannibalism, and made a dreaded substance called corpse powder by cooking and grinding up the flesh and bones of the dead. Their evil threw the world out of balance, and they were destroyed in a great earthquake and fire."[34]

Archaeologists have proven that the individuals living in Pueblo Bonito were the tallest in the Southwest. This was the mainly result of a protein-intensive and iron-rich diet, though distinctive genetics may have also play a part. The irony is (no pun intended): The San Juan Basin where Chaco lies has never been replete with big game animals such as the elk, moose, bighorn sheep, and bear that are found in the mountains. In addition, buffalo herds were restricted to the plains of eastern New Mexico. Pronghorn or mule deer are rarely seen now, but if they ever lived here at all in substantial numbers, they were probably hunted out in the first century or so of Chaco's existence. This left only smaller game such as rabbits, squirrels, raccoons, and wood rats—

hardly enough protein to produce the domineering height of the rulers. The only reasonable explanation is anthropophagy—or, to use the more common, emotionally charged term… cannibalism.

And emotion –primarily terror– was the paramount means of control. Did crypto-zoological giants akin to Bigfoot actually walk across the American Southwest? And did they have six toes on each foot? Or did unusually tall humans don gruesome masks to make their appearance even more fearsome? Whatever the case, these imposing figures endure.

Legends of giants are still dramatically represented in various Hopi sacred rituals. At one kachina dance I witnessed in the late 1990s at Oraibi, Arizona, a Hu Kachina, or Ogre, walked into the plaza, carrying an imposing butcher knife. His fierce presence even today is a terrifying reminder of the persistent role of giants in the Hopi world, whose ancestors once migrated to or inhabited Chaco Canyon.

The high desert is vast shadow-land of nightmares. Between extremes of heat and cold, blood and sand, mirages of giants waver among distant mesas. The secrets of their brutal ceremonies are lost to the past. Yet in our imagination, wooden drums still hypnotically resound through empty rooms of stone pueblos stained with ancient sorrow.

Ogre Kachina doll

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Brief Bio

A resident of northern Arizona for over 15 years, **Gary A. David** is author of *The Orion Zone: Ancient Star Cities of the American Southwest*, *Eye of the Phoenix: Mysterious Visions and Secrets of the American Southwest*, and his new book *The Kivas of Heaven: Ancient Hopi Starlore*—all available from Adventures Unlimited Press.

His articles or interviews have appeared in *Ancient American, Atlantis Rising*, *Fate*, *UFO*, and *World Explorer* magazines, as well as in *Lost Knowledge of the Ancients: A Graham Hancock Reader* and *Underground: The Disinformation Guide to Ancient Civilizations, Astonishing Archaeology and Hidden History*. He continues to give lectures and international radio interviews, and he recntly appeared on on the History Channel. His website is: www.theorionzone.com.